Koviloor Acadamy

# THREE TROUBLESOME MONKEYS

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## CHAPTER I

### AT THE RAILWAY-STATION

MISS CRESS sat down to breakfast. Beside her plate lay a letter. She put on her glasses, broke open the envelope, and began to read. As she read, her eyebrows went up, and the corners of her mouth went down. Having gone through the letter twice, she rang the bell. Her maid hurried up-stairs.

"Timmens," began Miss Cress, "I have just had a letter from my sister, Mrs. Brown, to say that her husband is very ill, and she wants to know if I can have the

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children to stay here for a week or two. She is sending them by the 12.20 train."

"How many children are there, ma'am?" asked Timmens, as though she expected at least a dozen.

"There are three. Master Philip is about eight years old, Miss Georgie is six, and little Master Babs is four or five, I think. Will you please tell Peter to have the pony carriage ready at twelve o'clock? for I shall drive down and meet them at the station. And stop," added Miss Cress, as Timmens turned to leave the room. "Let us think what we had better have for dinner. I wonder what the children would like!"

"There's only a pair of fowl in the larder," said Timmens sadly. "But it seems a pity to have them eaten up all at once, ma'am."

"That will do very nicely," said Miss Cress; "that and an apple-pie."

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Having settled this important matter, Miss Cress went on with her breakfast.

At twelve o'clock the phaeton, drawn by the white pony, stood by the door. Miss Cress stepped into it, put on her gloves, pulled down her veil, and took up the reins.

"Are you ready, ma'am?" said old Peter, who stood at the pony's head.

"Quite. Go on, Whisker!" Old Peter stood back, and Whisker and Miss Cress set off, jogging soberly down the sunny, dusty road until they reached the station.

There was plenty of time to spare, for the train had not yet come in, so Miss Cress, leaving a boy in charge of Whisker, walked up and down the platform.

Presently the train came puffing through the tunnel, and as it came up to the platform Miss Cress beheld to her horror a small boy with very red cheeks leaning far out of the window, and grinning from

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ear to ear, although from out of the carriage he was in came piercing shrieks.

"I say, Aunt Jo!" he shouted as he was whirled past her to the very end of the platform. "Hurry up, do! Babs is in an awful fix. We can't get him down!"

In breathless haste Miss Cress ran along the platform until she reached the carriage in which was her nephew. Quite a little crowd stood round to see what was the matter, and a smiling porter was unlocking the door.

"Oh! what's the matter?" gasped Miss Cress.

"Nothing, ma'am," replied the porter, "except that they've gone and put the child up in the parcel rack!"

"We were pretending Babs was an umbrella, but we couldn't get him down again," explained Philip.

Miss Cress looked into the carriage,

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and there, flat on his back, howling loudly, lay her younger nephew in the parcel rack. The porter lifted him down, and then, as his cries ceased, Miss Cress felt something tugging at the edge of her mantle, and, looking down, she saw her niece, Georgie, with a large white puppy in her arms.

"My dear children!" began Miss Cress, as she at last found herself with the three children, the puppy, and a number of packages safely on the platform, and the train had steamed away. "My dear children! Why did your mother let you travel by yourselves?"

"'Cos she couldn't leave Daddy," explained Philip and Georgie, both speaking at the same time. "And Nurse couldn't leave baby. She did ask an old lady who was in the carriage with us, to look after us, but when the old lady saw the white rat she got quite cross and frightened,

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the silly old thing, and got out at the next station!"

"A white rat!" cried Miss Cress. "I cannot bear rats! Oh, where is it?"

"He's somewhere up the back of my jacket. Where are you, you little rascal?" As he spoke, Philip put up his hand to the collar of his coat, and out ran a small white rat with a very long tail and pink eyes.

"Isn't he a beauty, Aunt Jo?"

Miss Cress shuddered and drew back several steps.

"I really don't know what to do!" she began; but at this moment her attention was drawn to a curious noise coming from under the green baize covering. It was very like a number of corks being drawn, one after the other. "Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop!" and then was heard a deep gruff voice which said:

"Three cheers for the Queen. Hip! hip! hurrah!"

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"What on earth is that?" cried Miss Cress, turning quickly round.

"That's my beautiful Polly!" said Babs. "It can say lots of funny things, and it

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has the loveliest red tail, and it can shake hands. Do shake his claw, Aunt Jo!"

"Flips!" cried Georgie angrily. "If you don't keep Alexander in your pocket my 'pog' will swallow him, tail and all!"

"He will get up my sleeve," replied Philip, wriggling uneasily. "I can't catch him. Stop, though! I feel his tail now. There, I have him." And he pulled out the squeaking rat.

"Philip!" said Miss Cress severely, "I really cannot, and will not, sit in the carriage with a rat. I shall have to hire a cab for you." Then, turning to the porter, she added: "Please get a cab for that young gentleman, and put all this luggage on the top of it. I shall take the other children in the pony carriage."

Having said this, Miss Cress lifted her skirt with one hand, held Babs with the other, and led the way.

"Where's my beautiful Polly going to

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be put?" asked Babs, as Miss Cress told him to jump into the phaeton. "I won't go without my Polly sitting beside me!" And Babs stopped short, rolled out an inch of his underlip, and drew a long breath.

"Porter!" said Miss Cress, who dreaded to hear Babs scream again. "Porter! Please put that parrot's cage here on the front seat."

The parrot's cage being lifted off the cab and put on the seat of the phaeton, Babs scrambled in beside it, Georgie and the puppy took their places, Philip and the rat were safely shut up in the cab, Miss Cress said: "Go on, Whisker!" and the little procession started to the tune of "Merrily danced the Quaker's Wife!" coming from beneath the green baize.

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## CHAPTER II

### WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

BY the time the puppy was put in the kitchen, the parrot placed in the window of the dining-room, and the rat in its cage, shut up safely in an attic at the very top of the house, it was time for dinner.

Miss Cress said grace, and Timmens, stretching out her hand, was just going to take off the cover of the dish, when she was stopped short by Philip calling quickly:

"Oh, stop, Timmens! Don't take off the cover yet!"

Timmens drew back and looked at her mistress.

"We haven't guessed yet," Philip added, before Miss Cress could speak. "I say it's beefsteak!"

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picnic to-morrow. There are to be a great many grown-up people at it, and a few children. But if I take you with me you must really promise to be very, very good and quiet."

"I'll be gooder than gold!" said Philip.

"And me too!" said Georgie.

"Me too!" said Babs.

"I do wish to-morrow was not such a long, long time to wait!" sighed Georgie. "Aunt Jo! Mayn't I wear my white frock and my blue sash?"

"Yes, my dear."

When Georgie heard this, she held up her head very high, gave her curls a toss, and, looking proudly at Philip, said:

"Don't you wish you could wear a blue sash? Don't you wish you could wear a white frock? Don't you wish—"

"Not I! I don't care for stupid girls' things. Don't you wish your curly wig was cut short? Don't you wish you'd

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some time get a moustache? Don't you—"

"Hush! hush! Philip. You really must not speak so rudely to your sister."

"She's worse than a sister; she's a plague!" muttered Philip.

Miss Cress stood up from table.

"Now, children," she said, "you may go and play in the garden. I have some letters to write, but I shall come out in an hour or so and see what you are doing."

"That's a pretty dear!" said the parrot gravely.

Miss Cress smiled at the bird and gave him a lump of sugar, and the children ran out into the garden.

In one corner of the garden was a nice summer-house. It was built in the shape of a hexagon, that is, it had six sides, so that there was a three-cornered space between the back of it and the garden walls.

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Philip ran into it, looked round, and said:

"What a stupid place! We can't play here! I vote we build a summer-house for ourselves."

"Oh! There's my 'pog' has run away!" cried Georgie, as the puppy rushed in behind the summer-house and began to bark.

"Let's go after him!" said Philip, pushing his way through the shrubs which grew at the sides of the summer-house.

He managed to squeeze in between the walls, and then shouted:

"Oh! There's the jolliest place in here! Come on! We'll build ourselves a house in here, and no one will be able to get in after us."

Georgie and Babs got in, and looked round with delight.

"Why, it's just 'scrumptious'. It will make the jolliest house, with two door-

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ways and three walls. We've only to make a roof and some seats."

"Yes," said Philip. "And there are a lot of boards in the yard. Let us go and get some; they are just the right size. Come on!" And Philip, followed by the others, ran off to the yard, where a pile of boards had been left by the carpenter, who was making a hen-house in the field.

After nearly two hours' hard work the children managed to drag enough boards behind the summer-house to make a seat all round, and Philip, very hot, and red in the face, was trying to make a roof, when Miss Cress's voice was heard calling to them.

"Hush!" whispered Philip, for the first time feeling doubtful whether his aunt would approve of his work. "Hush! Don't say a word."

"Children! Children! Children!" The

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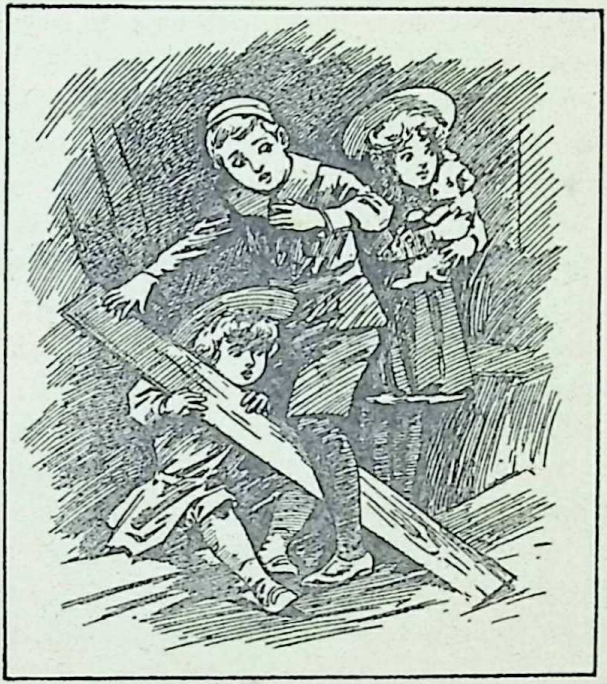

voice became more and more distinct as Miss Cress came along the path.

She stopped at the door of the summer-house and looked in.

The children held their breath; they

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felt she must see them even through the wooden walls.

"Timmens said she was sure they were in the summer-house!" murmured Miss Cress as she passed on.

She had just reached the garden gate, however, when one of the boards which Philip had put up by way of a roof, gave way, and, falling on Georgie's head, hit her such a blow on the nose that it began to pour blood.

She began to sob, the puppy began to bark, and as Miss Cress hurried back she saw, to her wonder and horror, the most wretched-looking trio appear from behind the bushes. Georgie, with her face and pinafore covered with blood and tears; Philip, with his jacket torn, and his hands and face a mass of black smudges; and Babs, clean enough in front, but behind all clay and moss from where he had been sitting on the damp ground.

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Miss Cress held up her hands in horror.

"Well!" she said sternly. "One thing is certain, I shall not take you with me to-morrow to the picnic!"

At this Georgie sobbed, if possible, more bitterly than before, and Babs joined her.

"But, Aunt Jo," said Philip, "it wasn't Georgie's or Babs's fault. It was I who first thought of going behind the summer-house. Please let Georgie go to the picnic, she has got such a whack on the nose."

On hearing this, Miss Cress looked less angry.

"I'm glad to see, Philip," she said, "that you are not a coward, but can speak the truth and bear the blame when you deserve it. Go in now to Timmens and wash yourselves. As to the picnic, I shall think about it."

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## CHAPTER III

### THE PICNIC

THE next morning, at about six o'clock, as Miss Cress lay in bed fast asleep, she was roused by the sound of voices coming from the foot of her bed and the two sides.

"Aunt Jo! Aunt Jo! Aunt Jo!"

Miss Cress started and opened her eyes.

Perched on the iron rail at the end of the bed sat Philip, while at each side stood Georgie and Babs.

They were all in their night-dresses.

Miss Cress sat up in bed.

"What is the meaning of this, chil dren?" she asked sternly.

"We—we only wanted to know whether you are going to take us to the picnic or not," began Philip.

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"'Cos," added Georgie, "Babs always says before he gets up whether he is going to be a good or a bad boy for the day. When he says he is going to be good, he is awfully sweet, but when he says he will be bad, then Nurse says he is 'a regular little Tartar'; and so, you see, he wants to know about the picnic before he makes up his mind."

"If you don't all go back to bed at once and stay there quietly until Timmens comes to dress you," replied Miss Cress, "I shall certainly not take you. And as to Babs, he must learn to make up his mind to be a good boy every day, whether there is a picnic or not. There! be off with you at once!"

The three pattered out of the room on their bare feet.

Miss Cress smiled, lay down, and fell asleep for an hour or so.

During breakfast the children behaved

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very well indeed. They were so pleasant and good, in fact, that Miss Cress said they might come and watch her pack the hamper which she was to take to the picnic.

"Is not that a very large hamper?" asked Miss Cress as they all came into the kitchen.

"It is the only one we have in the house, ma'am," replied Timmens. "It will hold all the more straw, and keep the glass from any danger of breaking, ma'am."

"Well, yes," agreed Miss Cress. "But I am sorry it is so big; however, I suppose it will have to do. Now, bring me the bottles of lemonade and soda-water, and all the tumblers from the pantry."

The children looked on with great interest as Miss Cress and Timmens carefully wrapped up the bottles and glasses

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in paper and then covered them up in straw.

"Aunt Jo!" presently said Philip. "At any picnic I ever was at before, there was always something to pick—chickens and things, you know. Why are you taking nothing but stuff to drink? Aren't there to be any cakes or tarts or pies?"

"Oh, never fear!" explained Miss Cress, "there will be plenty to eat. You see, each lady is bringing something. One brings the meat, another brings the cakes, and I am bringing the glass and lemonade."

Miss Cress stopped short, listened, and cried:

"What's the matter now?"

From the store-room came loud cries, and Timmens saying:

"Now, Master Babs, you must not touch it. Put it down. There now, do be a good boy!"

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Miss Cress, Philip, and Georgie ran to the store-room, and there stood Babs, with his face fiery red and his mouth wide open. He had just dropped the best water-jug.

Miss Cress looked at the broken pieces on the floor and then said:

"Babs, you are a very naughty boy. You must stay at home to-day. I shall not take you with us to the picnic!"

Having said this, Miss Cress, looking very angry, walked away, finished packing the hamper, and told Peter to carry it out to the yard. She then went upstairs without taking any notice of Babs, who was now lying on his back, screaming as loudly as he was able.

The screams ceased suddenly, and then the three children were heard running out into the yard.

"Philip and Georgie!" called Miss Cress, "it will be time for you to dress in about half an hour."

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"Very well, Aunt Jo," replied Philip very politely; "we'll come in, in a few minutes."

At one o'clock Miss Cress came downstairs ready to start.

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Old Peter was lifting the hamper into the carriage, and Philip and Georgie were standing watching him.

"You look very nice, my dears," said Miss Cress as she stepped into the carriage; and indeed Philip in his new grey suit, and Georgie in her white frock and blue sash, looked as nice a little nephew and niece as any aunt need wish to have.

After a drive of about a quarter of an hour they came to the wood where the picnic was to take place.

"Oh, there they are!" cried Philip, standing up and pointing eagerly towards where, under the shade of an oak tree, a number of ladies and gentlemen were standing, and several little boys and girls were running about.

On a level piece of grass a table-cloth was already spread, and partly-unpacked hampers lay around it. The carriage stopped, and Miss Cress and the children

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got out; the other guests came up and began chatting and laughing with Miss Cress, while Philip and Georgie stood shyly eyeing the other children.

Presently Miss Cress told Peter to lift down the hamper and lay it near the table-cloth. When this was done, she knelt down beside it and began to undo the lid.

"And what did you bring, dear Miss Cress?" asked a lady, laying down a jelly on the table-cloth just behind Miss Cress.

"I have brought—" began Miss Cress; then as she raised the lid she cried "Gracious goodness!" and in her astonishment sat plump down on the jelly, for out of the hamper hopped Babs, with his face very red and his pinafore very dirty.

All the ladies and gentlemen began to laugh very heartily.

"You see, Aunt Jo," explained Philip, "we could not bear to go off to the pic-

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nic without poor little Babs—it would be no fun without him—so we thought we would give you a lovely surprise, so that you wouldn't be angry with him any more."

"And," added Georgie, "we only broke three tumblers and one jug when we were lifting out the things. We were as careful as anything."

"I have a great mind to bring you all straight home!" cried Miss Cress; but here all the ladies and gentlemen began to talk at once, and to beg Miss Cress to forgive Babs, and the end of it was that ten minutes afterwards Babs was sitting beside the lady at the head of the table (or rather, end of the table-cloth), with a plate of good things before him.

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# CHAPTER IV

## THE RACES

AFTER lunch was over, and even Babs said he felt as though his jacket were buttoned too tight, the ladies and gentlemen strolled about the wood, and the children began to shout and play.

Presently, however, one of the gentlemen was heard calling: "Boys and girls! who would like to win a prize?"

Of course, on hearing this all the children came crowding round him. He was a very merry-looking old gentleman with a rosy smiling face, a white waistcoat, and a straw hat. He held in his hand a small basket filled with little parcels of various sizes and shapes.

"Come along all of you, whoever can run, jump, hop, or whistle, I've prizes to suit everyone! Come along, there's a

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beautiful smooth piece of grass in the next field, and there we'll have our sports, and whoever is through the gate first will win the first prize!"

On hearing this there was great laughing, and away ran all the children, and some of the grown-up people who liked a prize as much as though they were ten years old. Off they all dashed to the five-barred gate. It was locked, and too high to vault over, so such climbing as began, and then such cheering when Babs, lying down flat on the field, managed to wriggle under the gate before even the most active of the boys had climbed to the top bar!

"Well done, Master Babs!" cried the rosy-faced old gentleman, coming up. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Here's the prize."

Babs did not know what the gentleman meant, except that the prize was to be

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given to him, so he stood with his eyes fixed on the basket while the gentleman slowly opened it and then took out a beautiful box of sweets tied up with blue ribbon, with a picture of a soldier on the lid.

As the box was put in Babs's hand everyone cheered.

Then the old gentleman said:

"Now for a three-legged race. Prize for girl, a silver bangle, and for boy, a knife with three blades. Choose your partners, and come to the starting-place."

Ten boys and girls entered for this race. They had to run in pairs, with the boy's right ankle tied to the girl's left. It was very hard to run without falling. Philip chose Georgie as his partner because they had often practised this kind of running at home. But nobody chose Babs because he was so small. He ran about asking who would run with him,

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and when the race began before he could find a partner, he had to go back to Miss Cress's side and eat five sweets one after the other to keep himself from crying, until he forgot his disappointment in his interest in watching the race.

At first Philip and Georgie kept well in front of the others, in fact, they were quite sure of winning, when suddenly Georgie stumbled over a tuft of grass, and, losing his balance, Philip fell against her, and they both rolled on the ground.

"Well, you are a duffer!" cried Philip, as he sat up. "There's Johnny Jones and that girl with the curls in first!"

Georgie was too vexed to speak. Her nice white dress was soiled, her hand hurt, and, worst of all, the beautiful silver bangle which she wanted so much to win, given to that other girl.

"Now," cried the old gentleman, "choose your partners, and I advise you,

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choose young ladies who are good at sewing. Girls! here are needles! Take one apiece. Now you all stand in a row here, and you boys, take a piece of thread, and then go and stand over there opposite to the girls. At the signal you must run up to your partner and ask her to thread her needle with your piece of thread, and whoever comes back to me with the threaded needle first, will gain the prize."

Again poor Babs ran about with his bit of thread, but no one would agree to be his partner, until Miss Cress said she would like to enter for this race as there was no running in it, and that she would be Babs's partner.

She stood up with the little girls, put on her spectacles, and was ready with her needle when Babs came racing up behind all the others.

The little girls' hands trembled so that

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they could not quickly thread the needles, for the boys kept hurrying them by cries of: "Oh, do hurry! Won't it go through? There, why don't you twist the end of the thread?" But Miss Cress's hands were quite steady, so she had the needle threaded in a second, and handed it to Babs so quickly that he was half-way across to the winning-post before one of the other needles was threaded.

Babs's prize this time was a large box of tin soldiers, and Miss Cress's a doll, which she gave to Georgie to make up for her disappointment.

"Now," cried the old gentleman, "this is the last race but one. Boys and girls, stand in a line, and whoever hops on one leg to me first gets this beautiful writing-case. One, two, three and away!"

Dear me! Was ever there seen such hopping! They might have been a party

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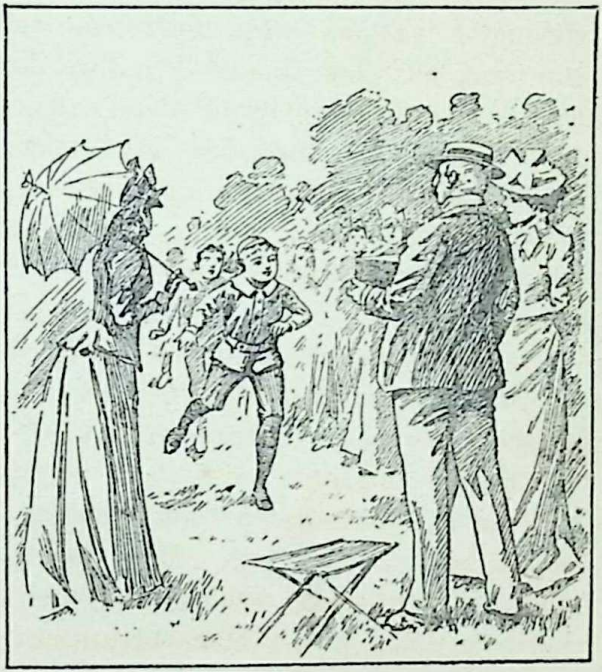
of frogs, they hopped so high, and they hopped so far, but the best hopper of the



whole set was Philip: he came in a yard ahead of the others.

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The prize was declared his, and proud he was as he opened it, and saw the splendid inside of the case, with its ink-bottle, blotter, pen, and pencil.

The last race was the funniest of all. The old gentleman took out of the basket a number of slips of paper with the names of tunes written on them, such as "The Soldiers of the Queen", "St. Patrick's Day", &c., and throwing these into a hat, he asked the boys to draw one apiece and go and stand in a line ten yards from the girls, and whistle whatever tune was named on the slip of paper. Whichever boy whistled so distinctly that his partner could tell the name of the tune, won the prize.

Such a noise began when the ten different tunes were all started at the same time! The girls could do nothing but laugh, and this made the boys, one after the other, laugh too, and as it is impos-

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sible to laugh and whistle at the same time, all the tunes stopped except "The Soldiers of the Queen", which a solemn-faced little boy kept on piping as gravely as a grey parrot.

Although he whistled it very badly, Georgie knew the tune, and rushing over to him, cried: "Oh, I know that tune, though you're whistling it all wrong!"

She was very pleased when she gained the prize of a pretty little silver whistle, for she had quite given up all hopes of gaining anything.

The races being over, the next thing was to boil the kettle for tea.

The place chosen for afternoon tea was a lovely piece of smooth grass among the silver birches by the river.

At a little distance a fire was lit, with three sticks set up over it from which to hang the kettle, just as the gypsies do, and then, by the edge of the stream,

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the table-cloth was spread, with plenty of plates of cakes, and strawberries and cream.

Tea was even nicer than lunch, for now no one felt shy, and the talk and laughter made as much noise as the crackling of the wood fire.

Running about so much had made the children as hungry as rabbits, and the cakes and strawberries disappeared at a most wonderful rate.

At last, however, Old Peter was seen leading Whisker down the lane. Miss Cress stood up and said: "Now, Philip, we must be off. Haven't you finished yet?"

"I'm finished, but I'm not done," replied Philip, looking sadly from his empty plate to some strawberries still remaining on the dish.

Miss Cress, however, took no notice of his slowness to stand up. She bid good-

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bye to the other ladies and gentlemen, and then, laying her hand on Babs's shoulder, cried:

"Now, my dear, be quick. It is really getting quite late. By the time we are home it will be nearly time for you to go to bed."

"Yes," remarked the rosy-cheeked old gentleman. "All the little chickens go to bed at sunset. Eh?"

"Yes," said Babs, "but the old cocks and hens go with them."

"It was the most awfully jolly picnic I ever was at!" cried Philip, as at last they drove homewards. "And aren't you glad, Aunt Jo, that poor little Babs didn't miss all the fun?"

"Yes, I am," said Miss Cress heartily, as she kissed Babs, who sat on her lap too happy and tired to talk much. After a moment, however, he put his arms round Miss Cress's neck and said sleepily:

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"I loves you, Aunt Jo," and then, laying his head on her shoulder, he dropped to sleep until they reached home.

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## CHAPTER V

### A PAPER-CHASE

"AUNT JO!" began Georgie next morning. "How are you going to amuse us to-day, I'd like to know?"

"My dear," replied Miss Cress, "you must not expect amusement every day."

"Why not?" asked Philip.

"Because if we have too much amusement it makes us lose our interest in work. Play is only meant to rest us after work. It is only very little children, who can do nothing else, who play all day. As we grow older we work longer and longer, and play less and less, because we have all our work to do in the world."

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"I thought it was only poor people who had to work," said Philip.

"No. Everyone has work to do, whether he is rich or poor, because everyone should try to make the world a better and a happier place than it is now."

Having said this very gravely, Miss Cress drank off her cup of tea and added with a smile: "However, as it happens, I have some amusement for you to-day."

"Oh, Aunt Jo! What is it?" cried Philip.

"I knew there was something," said Georgie, shaking her curls wisely, "because I heard that lady in the green dress say to you yesterday something about her children coming here to-day."

"Yes," replied Miss Cress. "I have asked the little Turners and the Smiths to spend the afternoon with you. Now, what do you think will be the best way to amuse them?"

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"Let's play 'hide-and-seek'," said Georgie.

"Well, my dear, I should rather you did not play that game, because, you see, my garden is so nice and neat and full of flowers, that I do not care for a number of children rushing about in it. I think it would be great fun if you were to have a paper-chase over the fields at the back of the house, and then come back here for tea at five o'clock."

"Oh, that will be jolly!" cried Philip, jumping up eagerly. "Mayn't I be the hare? And where can we get a lot of newspapers to tear up for 'scent'?"

"I'll get you some now," said Miss Cress, rising from the table and going to a press, out of which she took a number of old newspapers and a neat little knapsack.

The morning passed very quickly while they were cutting up the papers into tiny

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little pieces, and as the clock struck three the Smiths were seen hurrying up the avenue, and scarcely had they been shaken hands with, when up came the Turner boys.

When they heard about the paper-chase they were all delighted.

"Who is going to be the hare?" asked Fred Turner, who was nine years old, and the best runner of his age at school. "I should like to be the hare."

"But I'm going to be it!" said Philip quickly, laying hands on the knapsack.

"You can't run as fast as I can!" cried Fred Turner.

"Yes, I can; wait till you see me," replied Philip.

"Hush, boys, hush!" said Miss Cress. "Is there anyone else who would like to be the hare?"

But all the others said they would prefer to be "hounds", so Miss Cress continued:

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"We shall decide who is to be the hare by lots. Look here, Philip and Fred, here are two pieces of paper; now, whoever draws the longer piece will be the hare. Fred, you may draw first, as you are the visitor."

Miss Cress held out the two pieces of paper.

Fred, looking very hard at them, drew one, then Philip drew the other.

"Mine is the longer!" shouted Philip. "I'm the hare!" And he took up the knapsack and slung it over his shoulder. "Now, Aunt Jo, give me ten minutes start, and catch me who can!" he cried, and ran down the avenue.

Miss Cress held out her watch until the ten minutes were over, then she said: "Time is up!" and away flew the children down the avenue, and over the fields, as hard as they were able, Babs and Miss Cress coming at the very tail of the hunt.

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By the time Miss Cress and Babs had crossed one field, all the others were a

long way in front. They came to a gate; Babs wriggled somehow through the bars,

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and then ran on down the lane as fast as his fat legs would let him.

Miss Cress took some time to open the gate and close it behind her; when she had done so she looked for Babs, but he was not in sight.

"Babs! Babs!" called Miss Cress, but there was no answer.

At this moment Miss Cress caught sight of the red cap of Fred Turner on the top of the hill towards the right.

"I had better take a short cut across this field," said Miss Cress to herself. "They have, I'm sure, gone towards Mr. Hone's farm."

So saying, Miss Cress left off following the paper, and instead, went to a field through which she believed she could take a short cut which would bring her out on the lane down which Babs must come.

Miss Cress opened the gate. Right beside it was a sign-board with some

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T. S. Siva Rama Krishna



notice printed on it, but she did not stop to read it.

She shut the gate, and walked rapidly towards the other gate, which opened on to the lane.

At the opposite side were a number of cows. When Miss Cress was rather more than half-way across the field she was alarmed by seeing one of these supposed cows moving towards her.

She put up her glasses, dropped them, and set off at a pace which would have done credit even to Fred Turner.

"It's a bull!" she gasped, as she fled along.

A bull it was, and when it saw Miss Cress running, it began to run too.

Miss Cress ran, the bull ran. The gate seemed several miles away, and even if she reached it, how was she to open it? To climb over it was out of the question.

Near it was a shed. Miss Cress rushed

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to it, lifted the latch, opened the door, bounced in, and shut the door in the very face of the bull. She could hear him snorting angrily at the keyhole.

Trembling in every limb, Miss Cress stood holding on to the handle of the door.

Suddenly she felt a poke behind.

"Another bull!" she gasped, and looking round, she saw a large pig, which was inspecting her boots with much interest.

"Go away!" cried Miss Cress, giving the pig a poke in the ribs with her parasol, and eyeing it with disgust. "Go away!"

At the sound of her voice the bull bellowed, and Miss Cress trembled like a shape of jelly.

"Oh! what shall I do?" she thought. "If I call for help the bull will certainly break in the door, which does not look at all strongly made."

She next began to wonder when the cows would be milked. It was now only

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half-past three, most likely milking-time was not until five o'clock. Till then she need expect no help.

"Oh, what a plight I'm in! Never again, as long as I live, will I go for a paper-chase!"

With such thoughts Miss Cress passed the time.

Fortunately the pig grew hungry, and going back to his trough, began to eat and make disgusting noises.

The church clock struck four. Miss Cress ventured to open the door the least bit, but she nearly fainted as she saw the bull's black nose not a yard away.

She closed the door as quickly and as gently as she could, and hoped that the bull had not seen her.

The shed was very dirty, the heat was very great. Miss Cress began to think she would soon be able to stand no longer, and wondered would it annoy the pig

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very much if she were to sit down on the edge of his trough.

Suddenly, however, she heard, to her great joy, the sound of cart wheels coming along the lane. She wondered would it be rash to call out.

"Help! help!" she cried faintly.

Nobody answered, but she heard the rattle of cans, and someone pushing open the gate and saying in a gruff voice:

"Get out of that! Hi! hi!"

"Help! help! help!" called Miss Cress in a quaking voice.

A hand was laid on the latch, the door was pushed open, and there stood Miss Cress's milkman with his mouth wide open with surprise.

"Oh, Jones, Jones!" began poor Miss Cress, almost crying. "Is that dreadful bull gone? It's almost killed me." And she clung to his arm.

Jones drove the bull right to the very

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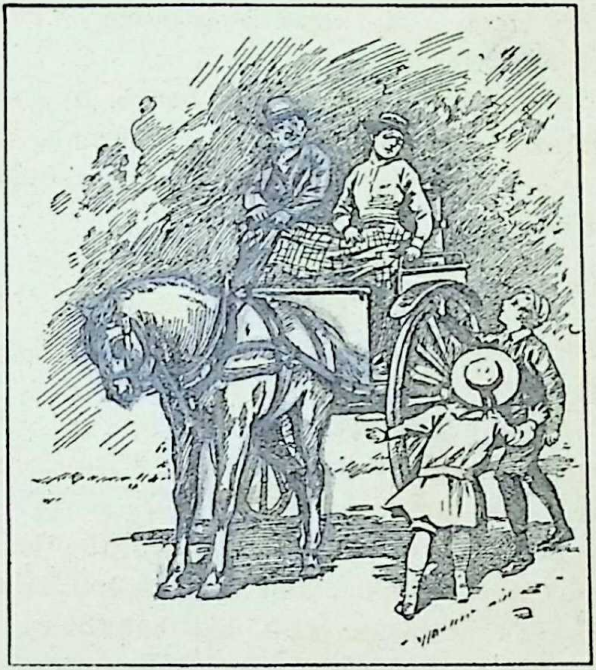

farthest corner of the field, and, coming back to Miss Cress, led her out of the gate.

"He do be a bit fresh at times!" he said, when he heard the story of her

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adventures; "but there's no harm in him at all."

He paused, looked at Miss Cress, and added: "If it ain't making too free, ma'am, I'd drive you home in the cart; you don't look able to walk."

"Indeed I am not," said Miss Cress. So Jones lifted her up and put her in the cart, and home they jogged.

Round the door stood all the laughing children, just come back,

"If it isn't Aunt Jo in the milk-cart!" cried Philip.

"How far did you get?" enquired Georgie.

Jones began explaining, and poor Miss Cress slowly clambered out of the cart.

"Well, Aunt Jo," cried Philip, "if you had followed the 'scent' properly, you would have been all right. It wasn't fair, you know, to go and take short cuts."

"Well, I've often heard that the shortest

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cut home is the longest way round," said Timmens as she helped her poor mistress to bed, "but never did I see such an example of it before, ma'am."

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## CHAPTER VI

### A BIRTHDAY PRESENT

THE next morning Miss Cress felt too tired to get up early, so after breakfast the children came upstairs to pay her a visit.

Philip knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Miss Cress.

The three children walked in, and, coming to the side of the bed, looked at Miss Cress with great curiosity and pity.

"It was a jolly shame the way you missed all the fun!" said Philip.

"And had to go to bed at five o'clock," said Georgie.

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"An' didn't get a bit of cake or nuffing," said Babs.

"But we've kept you something," added Philip, pulling out of his pocket a rather greasy little package done up in brown paper and tied round with pink cord.

"There!" and he laid it on the edge of the pillow.

"And there!" cried Georgie, laying beside it half an orange.

"And there's something lovely, and you may have the silver paper too!" said Babs, also laying down a soft piece of chocolate, to which was sticking a piece of paper.

Miss Cress thanked them, but begged them to lay the presents on a plate instead of on her pillow.

"I'm getting so many presents," she said, "one would think it was my birthday."

"Oh, when is your birthday?" asked

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Philip. "I should like to give you something lovely, to make up, you know."

"To-morrow is my birthday."

"Not really and truly?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Well, Aunt Jo," cried Georgie eagerly, "couldn't you give another little party, to make up for missing yesterday's party? It could be a party all for yourself. We wouldn't mind what you did. You could invite all the little old ladies and gentlemen you'd like to play with, you know."

Miss Cress laughed, but said she had had enough of parties to last her a very long time.

"Well, then," said Philip, "if you don't want a party or another paper-chase, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll give you lovely presents. I've got my money-box with me, and so have Georgie and Babs, and we've lots of money in them—lots! for we were only shaking them last

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night, and they made a jolly row. Now, what would you like?"

"My dear children, it is very kind of you to wish to give me a present, but I don't like you to spend your money on me."

"But we want to, 'cos we loves you," cried Babs, scrambling up on the bed, and kissing Miss Cress on the tip of her nose.

"Yes," said Philip. "Tell us anything you'd like to have, and we'll buy it."

"Well, my dear, I'll think about it; but now run away, for I must get up and dress."

In the afternoon Miss Cress was obliged to go out, so she called the children and said:

"My dears, I am obliged to go out for an hour or so, but I shall be home in time for supper. Now, while I am away, Philip, will you promise me not to get

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into any mischief? The other children always do just what you do, so it all depends on you whether they are good or not. It would give me more pleasure than any present you could buy me, if you would give up being a mischievous, thoughtless boy."

Philip grew rather red, but he said very good-temperedly:

"We'll sit right in the centre of the lawn until you come back, and then you know we can't do any mischief even if we wanted to."

"Oh," laughed Miss Cress, "you needn't sit quiet all the time. Now, good-bye! I depend on you, Philip, to look after the others."

As soon as they could see Miss Cress no longer, Philip, followed by Georgie and Babs, walked over to the very centre of the lawn and sat down.

"Now, here we'll stay till she comes

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back," said Philip. "Let's think what would be the jolliest thing to give her for her birthday present."

"I think Aunt Jo would like a little desk like mine filled with coloured note-paper, and sticks of red sealing-wax, and a pen, better than anything," said Georgie.

"You're a silly!" returned Philip. "Why, she has two desks already, besides a writing-table! Daddy says there's nothing grown-up people like better than a book, so I'm going to give her a stamp-album."

Georgie, angry at being called "a silly", replied that she was sure grown-up people never collected stamps, and as Philip could not recollect anyone who did, he was forced to give up the idea of buying the album, and think of something else. They had been arguing thus for nearly an hour, when suddenly Babs, looking up from the daisy-chain he was making, cried:

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"Look, here's a monkey man coming up the avenue!"

"Oh, come along!" shouted Philip, and, jumping to their feet, the children ran

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down to meet an organ-grinder who was wheeling his organ up the avenue. On the top of the organ sat a very small monkey wearing a red frock.

"Oh, what a little sweet darling!" cried Georgie. "Does it bite?"

"No, missie," said the organ-grinder, "he is very quiet."

"Oh, how I wish I had a monkey like that!" continued Georgie, scratching the monkey's tiny brown furry head. Philip caught hold of Georgie, pulled her aside, and said eagerly:

"Wouldn't it be a perfectly lovely present to give Aunt Jo?"

Georgie's eyes sparkled with delight. "Oh, Flip, if we could! But do you think the organ man would sell it?"

"I'll ask him."

Philip, getting very red in the face, walked boldly up to the man and said:

"I say! Will you sell us that monkey?

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We'll give you all the money we have if you'll sell it."

"Show me the money," replied the organ-grinder.

"It's in our money-boxes. We'll run in and get them. Please don't go away! We'll get them in a moment."

The organ-grinder kindly promised to wait, and the children rushed up to their room and returned with the money-boxes in their hands. It was rather hard to open the boxes, but the organ-grinder helped them, and, spreading out their money on the top of the organ, he counted it up. It came to the sum of twenty-two shillings, seven pennies, and three farthings.

"Will that be enough?" asked Philip eagerly.

"Yes," said the organ-grinder, "you may have him for that. And a very good bargain you're making!"

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And he dropped the money into his pocket, put the monkey into Philip's arms, wheeled off the organ, and was out of sight before the children could believe their good fortune.

"Oh, won't Aunt Jo be just delighted!" said Georgie.

"But we must not let her know anything about it till to-morrow," said Philip.

"We must hide it in your room," cried Georgie. "Come along quickly, for fear she comes home or Timmens sees us."

The children ran upstairs and reached the boys' room in safety. The monkey seemed a strangely quiet one. It sat on the bed blinking his eyes and making a queer choking little sound like a cough every now and then. Philip offered it a bit of biscuit, but it only took it in its tiny black paw, looked at it, and dropped it.

At this moment Miss Cress was heard

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coming in. The children shut the door of their room and dashed down-stairs.

"Oh, Aunt Jo!" shouted Philip, "we have got you the loveliest birthday present you ever had in all your life! But you mustn't ask what it is, for it is a secret."

"And, Aunt Jo!" said Georgie, "we want you, please, to promise not to go into the boys' room till to-morrow, and to tell Timmens not to go either. We can put Babs to bed, and we'll be as good as gold if Timmens will not come in."

"Do you hear that, Timmens?" laughed Miss Cress. "You are to promise faithfully not to go into Master Philip's room until to-morrow morning."

"Very well, ma'am," said Timmens, closing the hall door and going to the kitchen.

Miss Cress then went to her room, took off her bonnet, and came down-stairs to supper.

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"I must tell you," she said, as she cut the bread-and-butter, "of the funny thing that happened to me when I was at Mrs. Browne's. I was saying good-bye to her in the hall, when she said: 'Excuse me, Miss Cress, there's a white thread on your mantle.' She took hold of it, pulled it, and cried: 'Dear me, how queer!' I turned round to see what was the matter, and there! out came more than a yard of white thread. Mrs. Browne went on pulling, and out came yard after yard of thread. I never saw anything like it! I was like a perfect spider. I really thought the thread would never cease coming out of me. At last we examined the mantle, and found a spool between the cloth and the lining. The dressmaker must have sewn it in by mistake."

The children were laughing very heartily at this story, and indeed, Philip's eyes looked so twinkling as to raise some

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doubts in Miss Cress's mind, when suddenly a piercing shriek was heard, and then someone came rushing down the stairs screaming at every step.

Miss Cress and the children ran to the door.

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## CHAPTER VII

### A LONG-TAILED INVALID

IT was Timmens who was rushing downstairs, and on her back was the monkey.

When she reached the hall, either frightened by her shrieks, or tired of riding on her shoulders, the monkey dropped on to the bottom step of the stairs, and sat there blinking his eyes.

"You've broken your promise!" cried Philip very angrily. "And you have gone into my room."

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"Oh, I'm nearly killed!" gasped Timmens. "Is that awful little creetur off my back?"

"What made you go into my room?" again asked Philip.

"Because I heard strange noises going on in it, and I only just peeped in, when that horrid little creetur gave one lep on to my back, without as much as saying 'By your leave'!"

"If you had heard an earthquake in my room, that was no reason for breaking your promise," said Philip, still very angry.

Then he confessed to Miss Cress that the monkey was to be her birthday present. Having looked at it carefully for a moment or two, she said:

"I'm sure the poor creature is ill. Look how it is shivering! I have always heard that these small monkeys catch cold very easily. I'm sure it is dying. Look! its eyes are closing!"

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"Oh, Aunt Jo," said Philip, "can't you do something to make it better?" As

Philip spoke he rubbed the sleeve of his jacket across his eyes. The tears would come, for his heart was much more tender

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towards animals than towards human beings.

"Well," said Miss Cress, when she saw his distress, "the only chance is to see what warmth will do for it."

As she spoke she took up an old rug which was lying in the hall, and wrapping it round the monkey, actually carried the little creature in her arms, and taking it down-stairs to the kitchen, placed it in the puppy's basket before the fire.

"I wish we knew what we could do," she said.

Timmens, having partly recovered from her fright, now out of curiosity came over and looked at the monkey.

"If it was a Christian," she said, "a poultice would be the thing."

"A capital idea!" cried Miss Cress. "I do not see why it should not do it a great deal of good. Where is the linseed-meal?"

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Timmens, with a very scornful face, brought the linseed-meal. Miss Cress got a bowl, boiling water, and mixing a small poultice, spread it on a bit of flannel, tried it against her cheek to see it was not too hot, put it on the poor little monkey's chest, and tied it on firmly. Then she covered the monkey up snugly and said:

"Now, children, we had better leave it in quiet. When animals are ill, warmth and quiet cure them quicker than anything. Come along up-stairs. It is time for you to go to bed."

The children followed Miss Cress up-stairs, but when she bid them good-night, Philip begged to be allowed to sit up all night with the monkey.

"No, Philip, I cannot allow you to do that. Go to bed like a good boy. I shall take a look at the monkey the last thing before I go to bed, and see if it is still alive."

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Philip turned away very unwillingly, and went upstairs sadly and slowly.

Miss Cress sat reading in the drawing-room until eleven o'clock, then she put away her book and went down to the kitchen. The monkey was still alive, indeed he seemed better, for he was no longer shivering, and his eyes looked less dull.

Miss Cress heated a little milk, dipped a bit of bread in it, and offered it to the monkey, who took it in his little paw, smelt it, and ate it up. Then she held the cup close to him and he drank from it thirstily.

Miss Cress made up a fire to last the night, covered up the monkey, and went to bed.

As a rule, Miss Cress got up rather early, but the next morning she got up even earlier than usual.

She laughed at herself, but she really

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felt quite anxious to see how the small invalid in the kitchen was getting on.

Putting on her dressing-gown she hastened down-stairs.

"He's got over the night well, ma'am," said Timmens, who was opening the shutters.

Miss Cress bent over the basket, and a little brown head looked out from beneath the folds of the rug.

"He really does look better!" she said. "I'll give him some more bread and milk."

She heated the milk and was just going to feed the monkey when Philip in his shirt and trousers came running in.

"Oh, Aunt Jo!" he cried, "don't you think he looks better?"

"Yes, my dear, I really think he may recover."

And certainly the invalid seemed much better. He ate a good breakfast, but was glad afterwards to hide his head in the

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rug and be left in peace. No doubt, after a life of continual organ-grinding, a day of quiet and rest is a treat.

All that day Philip, Georgie, and Babs went about on tiptoe, and only spoke in whispers lest they should disturb the invalid.

In the evening Miss Cress went to pay the monkey a visit and give him his supper.

She sat down on a chair beside him. She had a couple of nuts in her hand to see if the invalid would care to eat them. Scarcely was she seated when Master Monkey put out his head, spied the nut, and pushing back the rug, jumped right on to Miss Cress's lap, took up a nut, turned it round and round in his tiny paw, put it between its teeth, cracked it, spat out the shell, and looked wisely round.

The children screamed with delight,

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and Philip, with his hands in his pockets, hopped from leg to leg with joy.

"Well, I never did see such impedence!" said Timmens.

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"Oh, isn't he a darling!" cried Georgie.

"He certainly is the only nice monkey I ever saw," said Miss Cress.

Next morning, as the children were in the dining-room, Miss Cress came in with her work-basket and some bits of red cloth in her hand. She sat down by the table and began to cut out a small garment which looked like a doll's frock.

"What are you making, Aunt Jo?" asked Georgie.

"Well," said Miss Cress with a smile, "I'm making a dress for the monkey. If he is to live here, he had better have something clean to wear."

"Oh, you are good, Aunt Jo!" cried Philip.

At this moment the door opened, and in came Mrs. Brown, the children's mother. After she had kissed the children all round, and told them the good news that their father was much better,

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she looked with some curiosity at Miss Cress's work and said:

"And what are you making, Josephine? That little frock looks too large for a doll and too small for a baby. What is it?"

Miss Cress looked somewhat confused as the children poured forth the history of the monkey.

Mrs. Brown laughed very heartily and then said:

"Really, Josephine, I should have thought the three troublesome monkeys you had in the house would be quite enough without getting another!"

"Well, but," said Miss Cress smiling, "the fact is, since this new monkey has come, the three others have turned into a nice little girl and two good boys, so as one monkey is less trouble than three, I suppose I had better keep Master Jacko."

THE END

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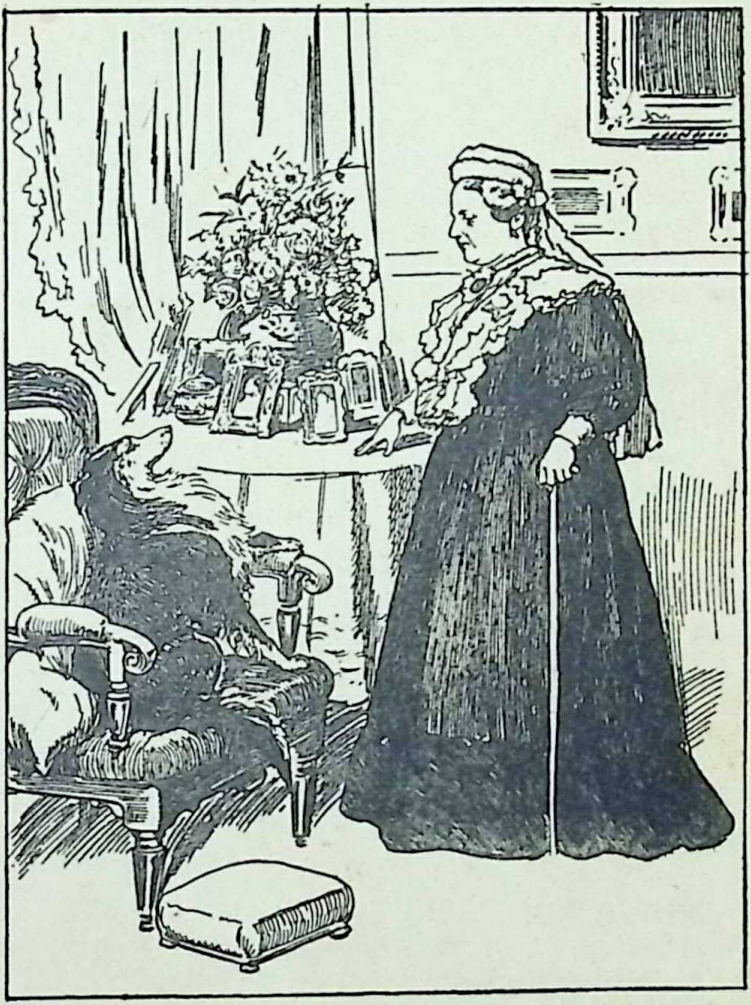

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